

Summer 6-15-2007

ENG 3009G-051: Myth and culture

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Stevens, Carol, "ENG 3009G-051: Myth and culture" (2007). *Summer 2007*. 6.
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English 3009G Section 051
 Myth and Culture
 4-week Summer 2007
 1:00-3:35 T, Th, 3150 Coleman Hall
M, W

Prof. Carol Stevens

Contact information:

Office: Coleman Hall 3861

Phone, Voice Mail 581-6970; e-mail cdstevens@eiu.edu

Office Hours: Except as otherwise announced, approximately one-half hour before and after each class meeting.

Course Description:

The catalog describes this course as follows: "Through comparative analysis of myths from selected cultural traditions, the course will examine relationships among mythic, historical, anthropological, and scientific ways of understanding." What that means for us is that we will be reading (among others) Near Eastern, Greek, Roman, Asian, and North American myths, and learning as much as we can about how the stories relate to and help us understand the cultures they come from. The class will involve a great deal of small-group and individual work in a variety of activities related to the material and the understanding of cultures, some lectures, and lots of discussion. There will be much reading and writing. *English 3009 is a writing-intensive course.*

Course Objectives:

By the end of the semester I expect you to know:

1. What myths are and how they function
2. How to distinguish among myths, legends, and folk tales
3. How to understand stories of some of the world's great cultures, including but not limited to Assyrian-Sumerian-Babylonian, Tibetan Buddhist, and Native American, especially Mayan and Navajo (and maybe a few others along the way. Please note: this is NOT a course in Greek and Roman Mythology.)
4. How these cultures differ from and are similar to each other and our own
5. How myths affect the practices and beliefs in a culture

With this knowledge I hope you will

1. Be more conscious of the forces and events that shape cultures and societies
2. Be able to speak and write clearly and well about myths and the cultures they represent
3. Be able to encounter myths and cultures you have not previously studied, and be able to reason to some understanding of them on your own.
4. Have a better understanding of the richness and diversity of cultures
5. Recognize references and allusions to these myths when you encounter them in art and literature
6. Take pleasure and enjoyment from your knowledge

Texts:

Dundes, *Sacred Narrative*
Hesse, *Siddhartha*
Leonard and McClure, *Myth and Knowing*
Lhalungpa, *The Life of Milarepa*
Sandars, *The Epic of Gilgamesh*
Tedlock, *Popol Vuh*
Zolbrod, *Dine Bahane, The Navajo Creation Story*

Grading:

Unless otherwise specified in class, your grade will be based upon 100 points assigned as follows:

Three hourly exams, incorporating short-answer and essay, during the second half of class the first three weeks—10 points each, 30 points total
Final exam the last class day--20 points
Paper involving some research and revision, due Thursday May 31—30 points
Attendance, participation and shorter work--20 points

I will use numbers rather than letters. These will convert into your final grade as follows: 91-100=A; 81-90=B; 71-80=C; 61-70=D. All assigned writings and exams must be done for you to pass the course. We may add, cancel, or revise some assignments. In that case, point totals may be adjusted also. You may revise the paper from this course for your Electronic Writing Portfolio.

Responsibilities and Policies:

1. Come to **EVERY** class meeting, and keep the lines of communication open. Late work gets lowered grades unless we've come to a clear understanding BEFORE the due date. Readings MUST be done by the class meeting for which they are assigned.
2. Attendance is important, as is participating in the discussions and bringing your contributions to the class. Absences will result in your getting many fewer participation points and may affect your grades on other assignments, as you may quickly get "out of the loop" on class discussion. If you miss class or assignment due dates, including readings, do NOT expect an A in this course.
3. The ethics of academic honesty dictate that students do their own work—always. Taking someone else's words or thoughts and using them in your own writing without giving credit is plagiarism. It can result in a failing grade for the paper and the course, must be reported to Judicial Affairs, and can receive other penalties as well. Students who have difficulty with the mechanics of documentation but make a good-faith effort to cite their sources will be required to rewrite their papers until satisfactory. The Writing Center, when open, has excellent tutors who can answer questions about documentation (and most other issues in writing). Here is the English Department statement on plagiarism: "Any teacher who discovers an act of plagiarism—'The appropriation or imitation of the language, ideas, and/or thoughts of another author and representation of them as one's original work' (*Random House Dictionary of the English Language*)—has the right and the responsibility to impose upon the guilty student an appropriate penalty, up to and including immediate assignment of a grade of F for the assigned essay and a grade of NC for the course, and to report the incident to the Judicial Affairs office." Please cite all

sources, including Internet sources, and be sure the text of your papers makes it clear whether you are summarizing, paraphrasing, or quoting directly.

4. If you have a documented disability and wish to receive academic accommodations, please contact the office of disability services (581-6583) as soon as possible. They will determine the accommodation you receive.
5. Papers should be typed, double-spaced, with your name, the class and section number, and due date of the assignment typed at the top, should have one-inch margins, and should use MLA style for documentation.
6. No cell phones, computers, mp3 players or other digital devices turned on or taken out in the classroom except for required academic accommodation as prescribed by Disability Services. No exceptions. Period. Take out the earbuds, turn off the player, shut down the computer and bag it, turn OFF the cell phone. Not on vibrate, but OFF. If you have an academic accommodation for a computer, the wireless access must be disabled for the duration of class—NO internet access. (If you keep your calendar on a cell phone, write down important dates in your notebook and transfer them OUT of class. This policy applies to any “break time” as well, as we will often continue working on individual questions during break and electronic devices constitute major distraction.

Syllabus of readings—English 3009G Section 051

The date on which a reading is listed is the date by which it must be completed for the beginning of class, REGARDLESS of what we discuss the day before. We may, rarely, get a bit behind in discussion, but should always be caught up with reading, and refresh as necessary to have enough grasp of both main ideas and details for sustained discussion.

Monday May 14 Introductions to the course, texts, each other, the terms ‘myth,’ ‘culture,’ ‘cosmogonic’; first in-class writing.

Tuesday, May 15 *Myth and Knowing* Chapter 1 “Purposes and Definitions,” 1-28 and Chapter 2 “Creation Myths,” 32-46 plus “Amma and Nummo Prepare the World,” 46-58; “The Creation, from *The Eddas*,” 58-62; “From Chaos to King Zeus,” 63-68; “Out of the Blue,” 68-75. Theories of myth and myths of creation.

Wednesday, May 16 The *Enuma Elish*, from the following website ONLY:

ccat.sas.upenn.edu/~hummm/Resources/Ane/enumaA.html - 50k

I do not recommend attempting to read the entire piece online. Download onto a disk or flash drive and read it on your own computer, a university computer, or print out to make reading easier. This now becomes an official text for the course. (The cost of printing and photocopying for the entire class is prohibitive, and this is a good version by an editor/translator whose work you will also be using for another text in the course)

Thursday, May 17 First hour: *The Epic of Gilgamesh* 61-119.
Second hour: first hourly exam.

Monday, May 21 Conclude discussion of Gilgamesh; presence of the myth in popular culture (watch relevant video);

Tuesday, May 22 *Myth and Knowing*, Chapter 3, “The Female Divine,” 107-122, and “The Fire Goddess,” 122-132; “White Buffalo Calf Woman,” 132-136; “The Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi,” 137-144.

Wednesday, May 23 *Myth and Knowing*, Chapter 4, “The Male Divine” 185-208, and “Bhagavad Gita,” 208-220; “Orunmila Gives the Orishas Their Powers and His Friendship with Eshu,” 227-232; “Quetzalcoatl Rescues the Precious Bones and Discovers Corn,” (239-243).

Thursday, May 24 First half of class: “Trickster Myths,” 247-253, and “Why We Tell Stories About Spider,” 253-256.
Second half of class—second hourly exam.

Monday, May 28 Memorial Day holiday—no class.

Revised Syllabus of readings—English 3009G Section 051

Please note—class meets four days a week, Monday through Thursday, from 1:00-3:35.

The date on which a reading is listed is the date by which it must be completed for the beginning of class, REGARDLESS of what we discuss the day before. We may, rarely, get a bit behind in discussion, but should always be caught up with reading, and refresh as necessary to have enough grasp of both main ideas and details for sustained discussion.

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Thursday, May 17 First hour: *The Epic of Gilgamesh* 61-119.
Second hour: first hourly exam.

Monday, May 21 Class assembles at 1:00 p.m. in South Lobby (the entrance by the clock tower) of Booth Library. We’ll meet with Karen Whisler for an orientation to Booth Library’s resources for research in Myth and Culture. Please note that this will not be a library tour as such, but a specific introduction to doing research on the topics we are studying, and on papers in Myth and Culture. We’ll remain in the library for the second half of class, and will do guided work on the papers as well as fill in a couple of gaps.

Tuesday, May 22 Conclude discussion of *Gilgamesh*; presence of the myth in popular culture (watch relevant video);

Wednesday, May 23 *Myth and Knowing*, Chapter 3, “The Female Divine,” 107-122, and “The Fire Goddess,” 122-132; “White Buffalo Calf Woman,” 132-136; “The Courtship of Inanna and Dumuzi,” 137-144.

Thursday, May 24 First half of class: *Myth and Knowing* “Trickster Myths,” 247-253, and “Why We Tell Stories About Spider,” 253-256.
Second half of class—second hourly exam.

Monday, May 28 Memorial Day holiday—Picnics, potato salad, hot dogs and hamburgers or veggie burgers and soy dogs, depending on your persuasion, but no class.

Tuesday, May 29 *Myth and Knowing*, Chapter 4, “The Male Divine” 185-208, and “Bhagavad Gita,” 208-220; “Orunmila Gives the Orishas Their Powers and His Friendship with Eshu,” 227-232; “Quetzalcoatl Rescues the Precious Bones and Discovers Corn,” (239-243).

Wednesday, May 30 Introduction to Buddhist thought: The Four Noble Truths, the Eightfold path, dharma, karma. For today, read *Siddhartha*.

Thursday, May 31 First half of class: Eva Van Dam’s online graphic novel version of *Life of Milarepa*, which may be found at the following URL: <http://c-level.com/milarepa/> You will need to click on the links at the left in sequence to follow the story. Second half of class: third hourly exam.

Monday, June 4 *Popol Vuh*, Parts 1 and 2 and papers due.

Tuesday, June 5 *Popol Vuh*, Part 3, and *Diné Bahané* Part 1

Wednesday, June 6 *Diné Bahané* Parts 2 and 3 and review.

Thursday, June 7 Final Exam
